

## An Analysis of Love Development in Buddhism<sup>(1)</sup>

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### Abstract

This article aims of analyzing an ordinary person's way of love development in the four forms of love (Brahmavihāra): Universal love (mettā), compassion (karunā), sympathetic joy (muditā), and equanimity (upekkhā). Buddhist thinkers propose their development in different three models, namely: 1) There is no cultivating step between the four forms of love; 2) There is a cultivating step from universal love to other three forms of love independently; and 3) There are cultivating steps from universal love to compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity respectively. The analysis discovered that the third model is the most possible way for an ordinary person to develop love because the other three forms of love are based on universal love and each step of development is different in its degrees of difficulty. As a result, the four forms of love develop as universal love purification.

Keywords: love, universal love, compassion, sympathetic joy, equanimity, love development

### ■ Introduction

As we all know love is an influential factor in our lives from the day we are born until the day we pass away. In general, we were born because of the love between our parents; most veterinary students love animals by nature; many people achieve success in their works because they have done them with love. And a number of human beings can develop their lives and overcome problems through encouragement from their beloved ones, whereas others take their lives because of disappointment with love. Phra Mitsuo Gavesako (2004, p. 33) mentioned: "Living without love is not truly life. The most important essence of our lives is love; both the happiness and suffering of our lives are based on love."

However, even if we have realized that love can bring about both happiness and suffering, we still need to love and to be loved. An attitude of love will bring more benefits than an attitude of hatred, which is invariably accompanied by various kinds of suffering, such as resistance, revenge, and killing. The state of war between various groups or nations is brought

about by an attitude of hatred. Thus, creating love is necessary for our happiness and the peace of the world as Thich Nhat Hanh (2007, p. 3), the Vietnamese Zen Master and Spiritual Leader, stated:

This world very much needs love... We need to support each other to build a community where love is something tangible. This may be the most important thing we can do for the survival of the earth. We have everything except love. We have to renew our way of loving. We have to really learn to love. The well-being of the world depends on us, on the way we live our daily lives, on the way we take care of the world, and on the way we love.

This statement shows that love is required to create a peaceful world, and all men are each person has a crucial part to play in that process. This notion is supported by the statement of the Dalai Lama (1999, p. 203), the spiritual leader of the Tibetan Buddhism, in that: "They are members of our own human family and have been nurtured within the society which we as

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individuals have helped to create. Peace in the world thus depends on peace in the hearts of individuals.” Therefore, in order to establish a worldwide community of love, we should cultivate love in our hearts first. Furthermore, the last sentence of Thich Nhat Hanh’s statement also implies that we should cultivate the right way of loving. Not just any kind of love will do, for it must be a love that can embrace the world. On the other hand, if we cultivate the wrong way of loving, the results will not necessarily be positive. In this case, Venerable Sangye Khadro (2007, pp. 9-10) raised some examples of a wrong way of loving as follows:

It is not right to think ‘I love my own children but not other children’, or ‘I love the people in my country but not those in other countries’, or ‘I am a Buddhist so I love Buddhists but not Christians, Muslims, etc’, or ‘I’ll be nice to humans but not to animals and insects.’ To love and help only those of own race, religion, country or gender is to limit ourselves.

These examples indicate that love with bias or a bounded love is not the right way of loving, and we should not cultivate it because it tends to lead to various conflicts between races, religions, countries, and so on. Innumerable tragedies in the history of humankind which seem to occur because of disagreement between races; beliefs; etc, are actually caused by a specific love reserved solely for their own groups. For example, the battle between the Christians and Muslims in the Crusades, the Black-White conflict in America, and the first and second World Wars. Similarly, in Thailand, there has been prolonged violence between state officers and some groups of villagers who live in the five provinces of the South. Certainly, those tragedies have brought about many losses for both sides, including the loss of life, loved ones, finances and property. With regard to these empirical facts, Onkom (2010, p. 513) mentioned in her academic article, *Religions and Peace: Buddhist Solutions to the Chaotic World* in the book ‘Global Recovery: The Buddhist Perspective’, thus: “Not only

hatred can be dangerous, but love can be dangerous too, especially when it is being abusively applied. Excessive love for one religion may lead to violent hatred for other religions, and that is highly dangerous.” Thus, to promote love in our hearts and a peaceful society, we should not only cultivate love instead of hatred but we should improve on the quality of that love too. As a result, the main objective of this article is to clarify the process of love development which will be concretely applied for practical purposes.

As for love in terms of religion, I believe that all religions teach love and peaceful co-existence, even if explained with different words and in various ways. Although we know that Buddhism focuses on creating wisdom, not love, it does not mean that love development is not important in Buddhist path because the Buddha stated in Mahapādāna sutta of Dīgha Nikāya: “Work ye no evil; give yourselves to good; Cleanse ye your hearts—so runs the Buddhas’ word” (D II 1). According to these three admonitions, Phra Srivissuddhimoli (2007, p. 129) clarified that: “The third instruction shows that Buddhism teaches more than an ethical code. It teaches not only to love and not to hate, but also how to achieve this, that is to say, how to love and how not to hate, so that our virtue and good behavior become natural and spontaneous instead of forced and premeditated.” His statement shows that the issue of love is inherent in the last exhortation and the Buddha has not only encouraged us to love but also taught us how to love because the attitude of love is a basis of our good conducts. In other words, the first two exhortations are based on the last one.

In Pāli Canon, the Buddha mentioned various words to refer to love in different contexts, for instances; rāga, piya, kāma, and so on. However, these kinds of love usually mean love towards a particular person and imply attachment which often causes bias and sufferings. As a result, in human relationship, a specific kind of love he has supported us to cultivate is universal love (mettā) as Phra Brahmagunabhorn (P. A. Payutto) (1996, p. 402) stated: “Buddhism differs in this respect from some other traditions that describe love and

compassion towards particular groups or kinds of beings, rather than as impartial, universal conditions.” This statement implies that the appreciative kind of love promoted in Buddhism is only the universal love, not the particular love (*sineha*). Likewise, the Buddha stated in *Karanīya Mettā Sutta* of *Khuddaka Nikāya*: “And let him too with love for all the worlds, maintain unbounded consciousness in being, above, below, and all round in between, untroubled, with no enemy or foe” (Kh 9). His statement indicates that we should not only love ourselves but also other beings around us without discrimination. However, there is an important principle which refers to the universal love, namely, *Brahmavihāra* or the four forms of love as Fronsdal (2010) mentioned as follows:

The Buddhist tradition encourages people to develop four different forms of love, called the four *Brahmavihāras*: loving-kindness (*mettā*), compassion (*karunā*), sympathetic joy (*muditā*), and, finally, an emotion that we don’t generally equate with love, equanimity (*upekkhā*). These are all forms of love because they all include a warm, tender, sympathetic attitude of the heart toward oneself or others.

His statement demonstrates that there are not only universal love we should cultivate but also compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity. I think that it is because our beloved people have to face various situations in their lives, for instances; getting sick, failing an exam, achieving their ambitions, and so on. Thus, we should create these four forms of love in order to apply them in those situations appropriately. Furthermore, most researches have confined their studies to the Theravāda tradition, disregarding the fact that each Buddhist tradition has a greatly different interpretation of the four forms of love. In fact, they merely focus on a different form of love as Gombrich (2007, p. 9), who wrote the article, *Mettā as a Means to Nibbana* in the book ‘International Seminar as a Celebration of His Majesty’s 80th Birthday on Can We Know What the Buddha Meant?’, mentioned: “I think our instincts in this matter are correct, because

the Theravāda tradition stresses the love, whereas the Mahāyāna stresses the compassion, and yet this reflects no difference in substance.” As a result, for this article, I do not concentrate solely on any specific Buddhist tradition. However, I found that Buddhist thinkers explain their development in different ways. Therefore, I will next analyze them.

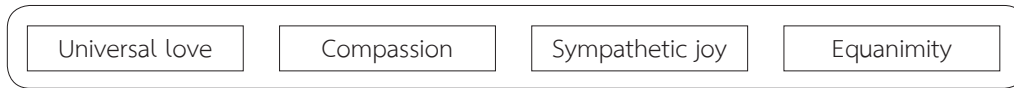
### ■ The Three Models of Love Development

Although these four forms of love seem easy to practice if we consider superficially, indeed, there are Buddhist thinkers who have explained the cultivating step of these four forms of love in different ways. Firstly, Phra Brahmaganabhorn (1996, p. 403) thought that: “Good will, a quality that is developed right from the very beginning states of practice, is not such a simple or superficial quality as first seems.” His thought implies solely that we should cultivate the universal love first and subsequently move on to the last three forms of love. Secondly, Phra Mitsuo Gavesako (2004, p. 35) has clearly explained that universal love is the first quality of love development, and is followed by compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity respectively. Thirdly, Phra Amnat Khemapanyo (2004) suggested that these forms of love have no linear sequence of cultivation, so we can develop each form of love independently. Similarly, Phra Mahā Sutthichai Thitachayo (2003, p. 173) also explained precisely that:

At the usual time, man should have loving-kindness to each other; at the time facing difficulties, he should have compassion to each other; if ones are in the well-being conditions, man should have sympathetic joy to each other; if these three cannot be practiced, man should practice solely equanimity because that condition he should not use loving-kindness.

His explanation implies that these other three forms of love are not derived from universal love, but occur in response to different situations. The type of love required by a particular situation is variable. Notably, the form of love known as equanimity is mentioned as if it is in opposition to the form of

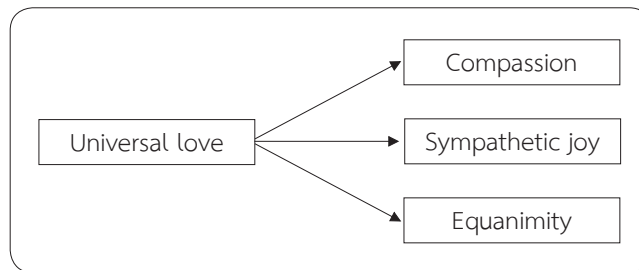
universal love, in other words, it is impossible to have both equanimity and universal love at the same time; they are mutually exclusive. For this reason, I categorize them into three models, as follows:



1. The first model: there is no step between the four forms of love, so we can develop each form individually without starting with universal love.

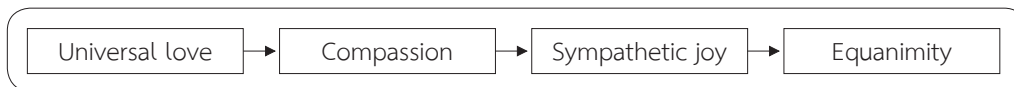
2. The second model: there is a step from universal love to other three forms of love independently, so we should first develop the

universal love and then develop the other three forms separately.



3. The third model: there are steps from universal love to compassion, to sympathetic joy, and to equanimity respectively. Therefore, we should first

develop universal love and then the other three forms of love consecutively.



### ■ The Four Forms of Love (Brahmavihāra)

In the first place, before analysis those three models of love development, I intend to clarify the concept of the four forms of love in three issues which are related to love development. These are, 1) The Essence of the Four Forms of Love, 2) The Relation between the Four Forms of Love and Nirvana, and 3) The Practical Dimension of the Four Forms of Love.

#### 1. The Essence of the Four Forms of Love

In Buddhism, there are many wholesome forms of love we should cultivate because the universal love is solely a form of love which should be cultivated for the purpose of creating peace among all beings under ordinary circumstances. In fact, our loved ones have faced many situations in their lives such

as illness, great success and so on. In these various situations, there are other forms of wholesome love that must be cultivated and applied in the appropriate situation, namely, compassion; sympathetic joy; and equanimity, which make up the four forms of love (Brahmavihāra).

The four forms of love comprise:

1. Universal love (Mettā), friendliness, goodwill: The desire to help all beings attain benefit and happiness.
2. Compassion (Karunā): The wish to help all beings to be liberated from their suffering.
3. Sympathetic joy (Muditā), altruistic joy: The feeling of gladness when one sees others do good or attain success.

4. Equanimity (Upekkhā), neutrality: The comprehensive watching when others can take responsibility for themselves, or experience good and evil due to the causes they have created. (A III 223, D I 235, D II 169, D III 207, and Vbh 272)

Literally, Buddhaghosa (2013, p. 313) clarified in the Visuddhimagga, the four divine abiding (Brahmavihāra) are ways of living (vihāra) like deities (Brahmā gods). This is they embody the best attitude to have towards all beings. And just as Brahmā gods abide with immaculate minds, so too human beings who thoroughly develop these abiding abide on an equal footing with Brahmā gods (Vism.IX.106). On the one hand, Venerable Phrakhrūbhāvanāvisuddhiguna (2015, pp. 96-99), an insight meditation teacher (Phravipassanācāriya), explained that the Brahmavihāra means the residence (vihāra) of the Brahmā god, not the Brahmā god himself. One who creates a good residence can live happily just as a leader who can engender these four forms of love in the mind of his followers can live together with them peacefully. Therefore, in Thailand, the practice of the Brahmavihāra is considered important for those in positions of leadership, because in order to impart these qualities to their subordinates, they must embody them first. As a result, I think that the Brahmavihāra is necessary for all human beings to create a peaceful society. If the Brahmavihāra is developed in the mind of subordinates but not in the mind of their ruler, a peaceful co-existence might not be occurred.

These four forms of love can be divided according to the situations that arise with regard to our loved ones. That is, universal love should be used in general situations. Compassion should be used when they get into hardship and misery. Besides, I think that compassion can come in the form of advice to others when they create the causes of suffering. Sympathetic joy should be used when others achieve success or behave in the right way. And equanimity should be used when they are able to take care of themselves, or they receive the unpleasant results of their previous deeds and there is no way to help them.

However, Phra Amnat Khemapanyo (2004, p. 37) stated in his thesis that equanimity should not be used in situations when others gain benefit by means of a wrong action. His statement implies that we should direct sympathetic joy only towards those who achieve success by means of wholesome action. On the contrary, if we know that others' achievements are gained on account of wrong actions, we should neither appraise nor blame them, but detachedly observe them and try to understand the situation. Some such instances include a student who passes an examination by cheating or a politician who gets rich as a result of corruption. If we rejoice at their gains, our response will act as a positive reinforcement and encourage them to behave similarly in the future.

In final form of love, equanimity, is used in situation where compassion and sympathetic joy should not or cannot be applied. I notice that although equanimity is a passive state, we neither ignore others nor hate them because we still observe them with understanding that their situation stems from causes and conditions. Therefore, if the situation fluctuates and the application of compassion and sympathetic joy become appropriate, we will be ready to act upon these forms of love. Buddhādāsa Bhikkhu (1998, pp. 22-23) explained that Upekkhā means watching without doing anything, yet waiting for the appropriate opportunity to do something. This definition arises from the etymology of the word 'upekkhā' which is derived from the Pāli word, 'upa' meaning 'bringing towards', and 'ikh' meaning 'to see'. So, 'upekkhā' means bringing towards what is one seeing. That is to say, the equanimity is observing with love and understanding towards other people without an inclination to be glad or sad towards their situations.

This is incompatible with what Holder (2011, p. 12) stated in his academic article, *Reconstructing Nibbāna as a Social Idea* in the journal 'The Chulalongkorn Journal of Buddhist Studies', that: "We should note that the first three of these moral ideas requires involvement with other people. They simply cannot be divorced from a social context. For

instance, loving kindness requires another person or being to be lovingly kind towards.” His statement implies that mere equanimity does not require others. I disagree with him because there are not only the first three forms of love but also the fourth, equanimity, which needs involvement with other persons through the comprehensive observance of them as stated above.

However, in some discourses of Buddhist scriptures, the Buddha has compared these four forms of love to the attitudes which parents feel for their children. He commented in the Sabrahmaka sutta of the Aṅguttara Nikāya that: “Mother and father are called ‘Brahmā’ and also ‘first teachers’. They are worthy of gifts from their children, for they have compassion for their offspring” (A I 132). This mention is compatible with a common belief in Thai society that parental love is the purest love of mankind. We often hear that “parents are Brahmās of their children” because their minds generally attain the four forms of love towards their children. Besides, the Buddha also stated in the Karaniya Metta Sutta of the Khuddaka Nikāya: “And just as might a mother with her life protect the son that was her only child, so let him then for every living thing maintain unbounded consciousness in being” (Kh 9). According to these two discourses, although the Buddha seems to appreciate parental love, I think that it does not mean that solely parents are capable of attaining these four forms of love or realizing the purest love.

There are two main reasons for this. Firstly, the Buddha’s teaching on love could be applied to everyone, not only a particular group of people, such as parents. Mental development is needed for all mankind in order to bring peace both individually and at a societal level. For Buddhist standpoint, all human beings have the potential to achieve Nirvana. Since the generation of wholesome love is an essential means to reach that aim, it follows that everyone has an equal capability to practice and attain the highest goal of love development and the ultimate goal of Buddhism. As such, it is impossible that only parents should be capable of attaining the purest love and Nirvana.

Secondly, there are many cases of violence in families, for instances; abortion; corporal punishment; and other kinds of child abuse perpetuated by parents. These cases demonstrate that many parents indeed do not attain the four forms of love, that is to say, they are not Brahmās of their children. According to this factual evidence, I think that the Thai society’s belief in parental love is a mere social expectation. In actual fact, most parents are just ordinary people who are filled with defilements. Therefore, love development is required for all people in equal measure regardless of their social status, such as a mother, a doctor, a teacher, and so on. However, I also think that the parental love which the Buddha mentioned above refers to solely the love of a kind parent who has realized these forms of love. In the latter statement of the Buddha mentioned above, he recommends that we should love others in the same way that we love our children. In other words, we should extend our love towards all beings as if they were our own children. This implies that parental love is not the purest form of love because it is still particular love. Therefore, we should gradually purify and expand this love to others until we attain pure universal love permanently, just like the Arahants.

## 2. *The Relation between the Four Forms of Love and Nirvana*

Some Buddhist thinkers have misunderstood that Nirvana can be reached by practicing the four forms of love only, because the Buddha mentioned in the Dhammapada of the Khuddaka Nikāya: “The monk who abides in universal love and is deeply devoted to the Teaching of the Buddha attains the peace of Nibbana, the bliss of the cessation of all conditioned things” (Dh 74). And he also stated in the Karaniya Mettā Sutta of the Khuddaka Nikāya: “But when he has no trafficking with views, is virtuous, and has perfected seeing, and purges greed for sensual desires, he surely comes no more to any womb” (Kh 9). These two discourses, if regarded superficially, imply that practicing only the four forms of love can lead to freedom from the cycle of rebirth, or Nirvana.

However, there are many discourses that demonstrate that developing these four divine abiding will lead to rebirth in the World of Brahmā after death (A II 129, A III 223, D I 235, D II 169, and M II 74).

Although these discourses appear to be in disagreement, I believe that the four forms of love are a necessity for attaining Nirvana, because these forms of love belong to right thought, which is the second path factor of the Noble Eightfold Path (Magga) or the Path Leading to the Cessation of Suffering. The Buddha explained in the Makhādeva sutta of the Majjhima Nikāya that: “It is this same noble eightfold path, namely: Right understanding, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration. Ānanda, now, that good cycle is broken by me, to conduce to, for certain turning away, detachment, cessation, appeasement, realization, enlightenment and extinction” (M II 74). This means that everyone who attains Nirvana will achieve the four forms of love whereas someone who attains the four forms of love will either realize Nirvana or is reborn in the Brahmā realm.

Nevertheless, the Buddha encouraged us to strive for Nirvana, not rebirth in the World of Brahmā. In the Dhanañjani Sutta of the Majjhima Nikāya, when Venerable Sāriputta taught the Brahmim Dhanañjāni to cultivate the four forms of love in order to be reborn in the World of Brahmā, the Buddha reprimanded for him thus: “But why, Sariputta—when there was still more to be done, having established Dhanañjanin the brahman in the inferior Brahma world—did you get up from your seat and leave?” (M II 184). As the Buddha commented, the Brahmā world is not the ultimate goal of Buddhism, but it is merely the highest plane of heaven which cannot lead one to ultimate freedom from sufferings. In the Metta Sutta of the Aṅguttara Nikāya, the Buddha taught that: “The devas of Brahma’s retinue, monks, have a life-span of an eon. A run-of-the-mill person having stayed there, having used up all the life-span of those devas, goes to hell, to the animal womb, to the state of the hungry shades” (A II 128). This indicates that even though one takes rebirth in the World of Brahmā after the expiration of

his lifespan there, he could still be reborn as an animal, a hell being, and so on. Therefore, companionship with Brahmās is not the way to achieve liberation from suffering and the cycle of rebirth.

### 3. *The Practical Dimension of the Four Forms of Love*

Even though these four forms of love are only one aspect of the path to reach the highest goal of Buddhism, there are important mental states because they aid the development of the other path factors, especially right speech and right action. Phra Rajavaramuni (2007, p. 46) detailed the relation between these two ethical principles in his academic article, *Foundation of Buddhist Social Ethics* in the book ‘Vision of the Dhamma: A Collection of Buddhist Writings in English’, in that: “They are virtues or qualities of the mind or character, not of outward or social action. We can act out of mettā, but we cannot perform or do mettā... Loving-kindness, compassion, and sympathetic joy may lead to charity, kindly speech, and acts of service on various appropriate occasions, and equanimity is essential for equality and impartiality.” This indicates that the four forms of love can be expressed through the four principles of social integration (Saṅgha-vatthu) which consists of: charity (dāna), kindly and beneficial speech (piyavācā), acts of help or service (atthacariyā), and equality or impartiality (samānattatā) (D III 180, and A II 32). Therefore, to explain love or the four states of mind, most Buddhist thinkers usually raise examples in terms of actions in order to refer to these mental states concretely.

Nonetheless, I notice that we can perform the compassion and the sympathetic joy may be concretely expressed whereas the other two states of mind tend to exist only in the mental dimension. Especially universal love, as mentioned by Phra Rajavaramuni above: “we can act out of mettā but we cannot perform or do mettā”. It is possible that we can act out of universal love via actions of compassion and sympathetic joy, which implies that there is a relationship between universal love and these two states of mind. Similarly, whether or not we think that

a comprehensive observation is a kind of action, equanimity is also a form of action born of universal love.

In the case of equanimity, which is a neutral feeling or neutral attitude towards others, Ācāriya Buddhārakkhita (1989, p. 311) considered that: “This type of neutral mental reaction is hard to find in common humans. This mental state quality is seen in Arahants.” I agree with him because all ordinary people are usually distracted by suffering and happiness of others, so it is difficult for them to attain neutrality, especially towards their loved ones. At least, equanimity is different from compassion and sympathetic joy in terms of having no sympathetic attitude towards others’ situations. I think that sympathetic joy is a kind of sympathy towards others’ happiness, while compassion is a kind of sympathy towards others’ suffering. Venerable Sangye Khadro (2007, p. 13) stated: “Compassion involves understanding the situation of others. It asks us to put ourselves in the other person’s shoes.” He commented that compassion could be called “sympathetic sorrow” which spurs one to help others who are in situations of suffering.

Thus, a man who attains equanimity has no sympathetic attitude and its expression, such as helping and rejoicing with others. It is simply observing as Buddhaghosa clarified in the *Visuddhimagga* that: “... after that there is nothing to be done and so they should be practiced as a neutral model, in other words, the state of an onlooker—and equanimity has the promotion of neutrality as its characteristic; therefore, since their respective aims are the model of welfare, etc.” (*Vism.*IX.109.). This statement shows that in practicing equanimity, we only observe others as a neutral observer without interfering with the situation. To try to improve the situation would be a kind of goodwill, a wish for the welfare of others. For example, if our friend fails an exam because he has not studied, we do not aggravate him by condemning or laughing at him, but we choose to do nothing until he comes to regret his own actions. If, after that, he needs help from us to tutor him, we would teach him to the best of our ability out of our compassionate mind.

Moreover, in order to attain equanimity, we must overcome many unwholesome tendencies as Venerable Sangye Khadro (2007, p. 17) mentioned: “Equanimity is an attitude that involves having equal respect and concern for every being regardless of where they stand in relation to us... This involves gradually overcoming the three attitudes that run counter to it: possessive-attachment, uncaring indifference, and anger and ill will.” According to his statement, it seems that equanimity may be a form of universal love because it shares characteristics of universal love such as non-anger, goodwill and detachment. Besides, we should be free not only from sympathy but also uncaring indifference towards others. For example, a mother often warns her son not to drive too fast, but he usually disobeys her, so she stops reminding him, but still watches him with the universal love. Then if he gets hurt because of a car accident, the mother would neither feel sad nor glad about what has happened, because she understands that an accident is likely to occur when he drives so fast. The mother has already tried to caution him, so she can maintain her peace of mind, while also expressing compassion by taking him to the hospital and / or warning him again in the appropriate situation.

As a result, whenever one attains equanimity, it does not mean that one does not love him anymore as Thich Nhat Hanh (1998, p. 174) mentioned: “People who do not understand Buddhism sometimes think *upeksha* means indifference, but true equanimity is neither cold nor indifferent... *Upeksha* does not mean that you do not love. You love in a way that all your children receive your love, without discrimination.” However, many people cannot attain equanimity, because they are swayed by emotions of sorrow, pity, quilt and so on. On the other hand, they may be swayed by positive emotions such as pleasure and satisfaction. In the final case, they fail to attain equanimity because they are simply indifferent and uncaring. They lack in universal love towards other beings and themselves, because they allow their minds fall into non-peaceful feelings—sadness, gladness, and uncaring indifference. Besides, doing nothing in the



case of equanimity also implies that we do not harm or aggravate others, especially when they experience the bad results of formerly committed evil deeds. This is similar to the example of the car accident above. The mother does not aggravate him by condemnation or ridicule, which means that she still loves and cares for him as always. The point is not to make the situation worse than it already is.

As clarified above, I think that goodwill is inherent not only in the expression of equanimity, but also the expression of compassion and sympathetic joy. That is to say, one acts out of compassion in order to alleviate suffering which is a kind of goodwill. Further, one congratulates successful people so as to encourage them to do a continued with their good actions, which is a kind of goodwill also. In other words, the characteristic of goodwill appears in all forms of love, not only universal love, so it is possible that these other forms of love are related to universal love which supports the last two models of love development. I will next analyze the three models of love development.

### ■ The Analysis of the Three Models of Love Development

*The First Model: There is No Step between the Four Forms of Love*

There is evidence from the Pāli Cannon which seems to support the first model of love development. That is, the Analysis of the Illimitables in the Appamaññāvibhaṅga of the Basket of the Higher Doctrine (Abhidhammapiṭaka) states:

That which in beings is loving, act of loving-kindness, state of loving-kindness, loving-kindness that is mental freedom from ill-will...  
That which in beings is compassion, being compassionate, state of being compassionate, compassion that is mental freedom from cruelty...  
That which in beings is altruistic joy, act of altruistic joy, state of altruistic joy, altruistic joy that is mental freedom from jealousy...  
That which in beings is equanimity, act of equanimity, state of equanimity, equanimity that is mental freedom from distraction. (Vbh 272)

The Analysis of the Illimitables shows that each form of love can be used to eliminate specific unwholesome aspect of human tendency. That is, universal love eliminates ill-will; compassion eliminates cruelty; sympathetic joy eliminates jealousy; and equanimity eliminates distraction. The above statement has two main implications. Firstly, ordinary people are generally under the influence of unwholesome tendencies stemming from defilements. These defilements must be eliminated in order to free our minds. That is to say, love development is a process of mental liberation. Secondly, it seems that each form of love is independent from the other, so apply the appropriate forms of love depending on the situation. For examples, compassion should be applied when our loved ones get sick; equanimity should be applied when we cannot help others be free from the result of their previous actions. Thus, we can apply either form of love without linear order.

However, the first model of cultivating seems impossible because the last three forms of love tend to be related to universal love as the clarification in 3. Since universal love cannot be expressed directly, we find characteristics of universal love in all the other forms of love, which are compatible with the last two models of love development. Moreover, there is alternative evidence which rejects the first model of love development, I will next clarify it.

*The Second Model: There is a Step from Universal Love to the Other Three Forms of Love Independently*

Beside the clarification in 3., there is evidence from many discourses (suttas) in the Pāli Cannon which disagree with the first model, but support the second model and the third model of love development, such as in the Mettā Sutta of the Aṅguttara Nikāya:

There is the case where an individual keeps pervading the first direction—as well as the second direction, the third, & the fourth—with an awareness imbued with good will. Thus he keeps pervading above, below, & all around, everywhere & in every respect the all-encompassing cosmos with an awareness imbued with

good will: abundant, expansive, immeasurable, free from hostility, free from ill will... Again, there is the case where an individual keeps pervading the first direction—as well as the second direction, the third, & the fourth—with an awareness imbued with compassion... appreciation... equanimity. Thus he keeps pervading above, below, & all around, everywhere & in every respect the all-encompassing cosmos with an awareness imbued with equanimity: abundant, expansive, immeasurable, free from hostility, free from ill will. (A II 128)

This passage demonstrates that the main objective of love development in the four forms of love is to liberate the mind from hostility and ill-will. In other words, whenever a man can overcome hostility and ill-will, it means that he attains friendliness and goodwill, which are characteristics of universal love. Therefore, it is possible that each form of love stems from universal love which is compatible with the second and third models of love development. Besides, it is compatible with the statement of Phra Rajavaramuni (2007, p. 17) that: “It is only a sagacious and wise person who can really practice mettā in all its varied forms in daily life, and through all modes of human relationship.” If these forms of love are aspects of universal love, then love development in the four forms of love would involve the purification of universal love. Further, the unwholesome tendencies referred to in the Analysis of the Illimitables denote the dominant unwholesome characteristics that should be displaced by each form of love.

However, with regard to the clarification of universal love by its etymology, universal love (mettā) is more accurately defined as friendliness (‘mitta’ in Pāṭi) rather than goodwill, so goodwill is derived from friendliness. Therefore, in order to purify universal love in the aspect of friendliness, we should eliminate all kinds of hostility towards others. This includes ill-will but also cruelty, jealousy, and distraction. That is to say, once we can attain goodwill towards others, we achieve ‘the primary universal love’. On the other

hand, we can attain the other three forms of love in a moment, our minds will reach ‘the advanced universal love’. This implies that there are two kinds of universal love in the process of love development; primary universal love and advanced universal love. Compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity are all kinds of advanced universal love.

For this reason, primary universal love should be cultivated first and then developed into the other three forms of love according to the actual situations of the people around us. We may be able to attain primary universal love towards a person, but if we do not help him when he suffers, we show that we are unable to develop primary universal love into compassion. That is to say, primary universal love has not yet been purified. Likewise, if we cannot genuinely rejoice at others’ success, we are unable to get rid of envy and reach advanced universal love.

The Mettā Sutta of the Aṅguttara Nikāya seems to support the second model of cultivation. For examples, when we see someone suffering, we can change universal love into compassion by eliminating the cruelty in our mind. On the other hand, when we see someone achieving great success, we can change universal love into sympathetic joy by eradicating jealousy. These examples show that compassion and sympathetic joy have no step between each other. Therefore, we can generate sympathetic joy even though there may be cruelty in our mind. Similarly, we could still attain equanimity even if our mind was filled with cruelty and jealousy. I think that these are possible explanations if we reason that everyone is generally occupied by the unwholesome tendencies or defilements. Thus, although a man may attain universal love towards all people, he might attain all forms of love completely towards only a certain group of people, while he can reach solely a few forms of love towards another group of people. In other words, he may still envy some people and be cruel to some people. He may feel sad when people suffer and he is unable to help and so on.

Nevertheless, this article focuses on the steps of love development towards a non-specific person in

order to understand the steps of love development in our mind, which will enable us to develop an effective way of practice. In short, the second model of love development shows that there is no step between the last three forms of love, which implies that it is equally difficult to get rid of cruelty, jealousy, and distraction. There is also alternative evidence which indicates that the level of difficulty in eradicating these unwholesome tendencies is different. This brings us to the conclusion that the second model is also impossible to practice.

*The Third Model: Universal Love Develops into Compassion, Sympathetic Joy, and Equanimity Respectively*

The Mettā Sutta of the Aṅguttara Nikāya supports not only the second model but also the third model of love development. That is, there are steps between the other three forms of love. This signifies that we cannot attain sympathetic joy without getting rid of both cruelty and jealousy. This further implies that equanimity is the purest level of universal love in the Brahmavihāra, because the mind is not only free from cruelty and jealousy but also distraction. This model suggests that to engender sympathetic joy is more difficult than engendering compassion, and to cultivate equanimity is more difficult than cultivating sympathetic joy. As a result, if we consider the steps between compassion and sympathetic joy, we can further assume that eliminating jealousy is more difficult than eradicating cruelty. Oates (1983) stated in his academic article, *The Nature and Implications of Muditā* in the electronic book 'Muditā: The Buddha's Teaching on Unselfish Joy', that: "The former of these seems much the easier to achieve, since it is possible to feel compassion for suffering even in the absence of any positive friendliness for the sufferer, whereas it is only possible to share genuinely in another's joy if there is some element of true affection or friendliness present." His statement indicates that we are more inclined to help others, even strangers or enemies, when they suffer, than we are to sincerely congratulate others on their success unless they are very close to us.

For instance, we would undoubtedly rejoice with the victory of our favorite football team, but we would be unlikely to congratulate the team in opposition if their victory meant the defeat of our favorite team. This implies that attachment, which remains in another part of our mind at that moment, still influences our expression of love in all situations.

I agree with Oates that cultivating compassion is easier than generating sympathetic joy, because ordinary people tend to attach to self and compare themselves with others. They are inclined to have compassion towards someone who suffers because they are proud of themselves when they can help someone who is inferior to them. They would be proud of themselves more when the person being helped expresses appreciation for their compassionate action. On the other hand, to congratulate someone on his success or advancement is likely to make one feel inferiority and envious. That is to say, in the case of ordinary people, compassion can encourage both wholesome and unwholesome tendencies, while the sympathetic joy supports solely wholesome tendencies. Furthermore, Venerable Sangye Khadro (2007, pp. 12-13) confirmed that:

It is easier for compassion to arise towards some than towards others, but this is only because we have a limited idea of how beings suffer. For example, it is natural for compassion to arise when we see a beggar or a disabled person, but when we see a well-dressed lady driving a Mercedes, we are more likely to feel envy than compassion. That is because we don't realize that she also has suffering... Moreover, this lady, all the rest of us, is trapped in the cycle of death and rebirth.

His statement indicates that we often envy others based on physical appearance, especially if that person's endowments appear superior to our own. Such a superficial attitude fails to appreciate the similarity of all beings in the sense that we are all trapped in the cycle of rebirth and undoubtedly encounter physical and mental suffering. Besides, Venerable

Sangye Khadro (2007, pp. 15-16) also mentioned that: “Jealousy is a very painful feeling that makes us tense and closed to others. We cannot be happy when we are jealous. Rejoicing, on the other hand, is a beautiful feeling of sharing in others’ joy and success. It brings us closer to others.” His comment indicates that we usually disregard not only human tendencies but also negative consequences of our jealousy. Therefore, a man who is prone to jealousy brings harm upon himself because he does not harbor universal love towards himself or others.

Moreover, Nyanaponika Thera (1983) stated in his academic article, *Introduction: Is Unselfish Joy Practicable?* in the electronic book ‘Muditā: The Buddha’s Teaching on Unselfish Joy’, that: “In this troubled world of ours, there are plenty of opportunities for thoughts and deeds of compassion; but there seem to be all too few for sharing in others’ joy. Hence it is necessary for us to create new opportunities for unselfish joy, by the active practice of loving-kindness and compassion, in deeds, words, and meditative thought.” His statement confirms that universal love can indeed develop into other forms of love step by step. As such, if we are not able to generate compassion, we will also be unable to bring forth sympathetic joy. For this reason, we should expand the scope of primary universal love and compassion towards an ever large number of people in order that we may also practice sympathetic joy towards them. On the other hand, as long as we extend primary universal love and compassion towards only a small number of people, we have less opportunity to practice sympathetic joy. In other words, the number of people we can genuinely rejoice with will be less than the number of people we can feel primary universal love and compassion towards. For example, if we extend primary universal love towards 1,000 people, then we might only be able to extend compassion towards 700 of them, and we might only be able to extend the sympathetic joy towards only 300 of those 700 people. Therefore, we should begin by increasing the number of people we feel primary universal love for, in order to increase the chances of attaining compassion and sympathetic joy.

According to the above clarification, it seems that the second model of love development is incorrect, because we should start with primary universal love and then develop it to the higher levels of difficulty, namely, compassion and sympathetic joy respectively. If the third model of love development is correct, it is possible that the attainment of equanimity is the most difficult step of love development. In other words, to eliminate distraction is more difficult than eradicating jealousy. In order to be free from distraction, one should get rid of not only sympathetic joy and sympathetic sorrow, but also uncaring indifference towards others. Only by eliminating these hindrances one can maintain neutrality or caring indifference. It seems that equanimity contravenes the basic tendencies of human nature, since ordinary people normally give rise to various feelings based on sense-impression or contact (phassa). The Buddha stated in the Phassamulaka Sutta of the Samyutta Nikāya that:

Bhikkhus, these three feelings are born of contact, rooted in contact, with contact as their source and condition. What three? Pleasant feeling, painful feeling, neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling. In dependence on a contact to be experienced as pleasant, bhikkhus, a pleasant feeling arises. With the cessation of that contact to be experienced as pleasant, the corresponding feeling—the pleasant feeling that arose in dependence on that contact to be experienced as pleasant—ceases and subsides. (S IV 215)

According to this statement, even though it seems that the probability of neutral feeling arising is the same as that of pleasant and painful feelings, this is not the case. In fact, neutral feeling or equanimity is rarely attained by an ordinary person. This is especially true in the case of close relationship, such as a mother with her child. The mother will invariably sympathize with the predicament of her child, be ready to help them when needed (compassion) and rejoice at his success as her own success (sympathetic joy). As a result, it is not easy for her to simply observe her

child without doing anything (equanimity) because of this strongly possessive-attachment in her mind. For example, a nurse whose son has Down's Syndrome will keep on trying to search for a cure for his condition despite the fact that she knows there is no known treatment for this genetic disorder. On the contrary, she is hardly worried about other children with the same syndrome who are her patients in the hospital. Thus, possessive-attachment poses a great obstruction to her capacity for equanimity towards her son. That is why Buddhaghosa suggested: "... he should also see the advantage in equanimity because it is peaceful. Then he should arouse equanimity by looking on with equanimity at a person who is normally neutral; after that at a dear person, and the rest" (Vism.IX.88). His suggestion shows that whenever we can break down the barriers between people or understand that all people are equal as human beings, we can be free from possessive-attachment and abide in equanimity. In the case of that nurse mentioned above, if she can think of her son as just another who suffers in the cycle of rebirth as a result of previous karma, she would live with a peaceful mind.

However, this does not mean that in order to attain a neutral feeling towards a hostile person is easier than towards a beloved person because, according to the clarification above, equanimity is a form of the universal love. Therefore, we are able to attain universal love towards him in the first place, it is impossible for us to then attain a neutral feeling towards him. We will only be capable of achieving uncaring indifference. Thus, to develop the equanimity towards a person we hate is more difficult than towards a dear person. So in the example of the nurse above, although she is not concerned for her patients to the same degree as her son, it does not mean that she can easily attain equanimity towards them, unless she can first create a basic of primary universal love towards those patients. That is to say, to extend all forms of love has the same pattern of extending the primary universal love. One starts with a beloved person then a neutral person and a hostile person respectively (Vism.IX.4, 81, 86, 90).

In addition, to develop love towards a person according to the third model, I think that it is compatible with the meaning of universal love as Phra Brahmaganabhorn (1996, p. 403) defined: "Mettā means friendliness, love, goodwill, sympathy and understanding; the desire to create benefit for all beings, both human and animal." That is to say, primary universal love is goodwill, compassion and sympathetic joy are kinds of sympathy, and equanimity is understanding or comprehensive watching. Therefore, these four forms of love are components of universal love as friendliness and developing them is the process of universal love (friendliness) purification.

## ■ Conclusion

According to the critical analysis of these three models of love development, the third model is most plausible, because the last three forms of love are based on primary universal love and then applied according to the situation. Moreover, each step of development is different in its degrees of difficulty. That is to say, to develop compassion into sympathetic joy is more difficult than developing universal love into compassion because our minds are usually filled with envy. While acting out of compassion usually engenders a feeling of pride and superiority, acting out of sympathetic joy gives rise to the opposite feeling. Finally, to develop sympathetic joy into equanimity is the most difficult step because we are usually distracted by others' pain and pleasure. Thus, love development is the process of universal love purification because we must eliminate many unwholesome tendencies from our minds. Ill-will, cruelty, jealousy, and distraction must be discarded step by step until equanimity is achieved. Equanimity is the purest state of universal love.

Furthermore, this article not only demonstrates the method for developing and purifying our love according to the Buddhist perspective, but also shows that an aspect of human life is love of oneself and others. An attitude of love will lead to peace and harmony both on the individual and societal levels. In particular, the attitude of equanimity leads us to

understanding that we cannot help all beings and we cannot force others to love us or fulfill our expectations. Most importantly, nobody can help us to attain a peaceful mind, so we must take responsibility for our own lives. That is to say, we should first take care of our minds by disposing unwholesome tendencies and develop universal love towards all beings in order to create a peaceful society.

#### Abbreviations

A	: Aṅguttara Nikāya
D	: Dīgha Nikāya
Dh	: Dhammapada of the Khuddaka Nikāya
K	: Khuddaka Nikāya
Kh	: Khuddakapāṭha of the Khuddaka Nikāya
M	: Majjhima Nikāya
S	: Saṃyutta Nikāya
Vbh	: Vibhaṅga of Abhidhamma
Vism.	: Visuddhimagga

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